



*By Fred Fanning*

Are you willing to help save the life of a soldier returning from war? If so, Uncle Sam wants you to become a Guardian Angel. Soldiers returning from war are at high risk of being involved in accidents unless someone steps in to help stop them. Operation Guardian Angel is a new program designed to provide that help.

During a war, Army buddies watch over each other. Soldiers get used to this buddy system and depend on it. The buddy system provides a safety net for soldiers. However, when a soldier returns home or goes on leave, his buddy isn't there. Soldiers returning home need family and friends to watch over and assist them through this often difficult readjustment period. In a sense, the family members become the buddies. But life for the returning

- Using safety gear and practicing safety procedures.
- Taking along a buddy when hiking or swimming.

Guardian Angels help get the message out and recruit additional Guardian Angels in their community by contacting local radio and television stations to make public service announcements and asking groups such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), American Legion, American Veterans (AMVETS), and local school and community organizations to implement the program.

Support groups at the unit level are encouraged. Unit leaders can participate by identifying soldiers scheduled for leave and contacting the soldier's family to inform

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soldier can be very different from when they left. These soldiers go back to driving cars or motorcycles and begin reestablishing relationships with family and friends. Some soldiers may choose to overindulge in alcohol, while others may become distraught due to difficulty with relationships.

Operation Guardian Angel is a national campaign that encourages families, friends, neighborhoods, and communities to remind soldiers to practice safety procedures. The objective of the campaign is to protect soldiers from injuries and accidents. Guardian Angels talk to soldiers and remind them about such things as—

- Wearing seat belts.
- Avoiding drinking and driving (or calling a cab if they have been drinking).
- Planning for extra time during long trips or hazardous driving conditions.

them about the Guardian Angels. Family members can go to <http://safety.army.mil> to learn more about Operation Guardian Angel. The Web site also contains a printable certificate to display in a home or an automobile window.

Local establishments can support the program by registering on the Web site and printing a Guardian Angel certificate to display in their businesses. If a business serves alcohol, it can implement a designated driver or taxi program.

You can make a difference in the life of a soldier. Anyone who cares enough to help a soldier stay safe once they return home can participate in the program. Take the first step by becoming a Guardian Angel! 🍷🚗

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